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The content of teacher rating scales was investigated in a recently completed survey of the nation's 60 largest school districts. Of the 53 responding districts, 50 indicated that they are currently using some type of rating scale to measure teacher performance. Districts reported the purpose and type of scale being used, the frequency of rating, and the major evaluation categories. Respondents also indicated the types of teachers normally rated and the person(s) responsible for teacher rating. The appendix includes a frequency count of all responses. (JH)

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AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER RATING SCALES: A NATIONAL SURVEY

by

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AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER RATING SCALES

Introduction

With a view to updating its present teacher rating procedures, the Pittsburgh Public Schools have recently completed a survey of 60 largest school districts in the country.[1] Each district was asked to submit a copy of its current teacher rating forms together with any additional relevant information. Of the 53 responses, 50 districts indicated they are presently using some type of rating scale to measure teacher performance.

The high percentage of school districts using rating scales reflects the current emphasis on applying some type of quality control in teacher evaluation. Despite the general agreement that teacher effectiveness must ultimately be defined in terms of changes in pupil behavior, current practice attempts to measure this effectiveness through observation of classroom teaching.[2] The explanation given for this contradiction is that the learning process is so involved that it often requires "a recording instrument as sensitive, complex, and alert as a human observer."[3]

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[1] The list of schools is available in Population, School Population, Superintendents, and Directors of Research in Sixty Largest Cities in the U.S., Houston Independent School District, January 1969.

[2] Donald M. Medley and Harold E. Mitzel, "Measuring Classroom Behavior by Systematic Observation," Handbook of Research on Teaching, ed. N. L. Gage (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), pp. 248-249.

[3] H. H. Remmers, "Rating Methods in Research on Teaching," Handbook of Research on Teaching, p. 329.

The development of effective methods for recording and communicating such ratings continues to be a major problem facing many school districts today.

The immediate concern is to determine the content of such rating scales. On this subject, the literature is not particularly helpful. Most criteria to which rating scales are expected to adhere--reliability, validity, sensitivity, and objectivity--are more helpful in evaluating existing scales than in establishing new ones. Implicit in the literature and borne out in practice is the assumption that school administrators are capable of determining the important qualities, behaviors, and skills of an effective teacher.

Nevertheless, the need for an acceptable standard rating procedure remains. This need underlies the present study. Its goals are:

1. To explore the nature of the current methodological practices in the rating of teachers

2. To determine the face validity of rating categories as indicated by the frequency of their use

3. To suggest hypotheses for further study

Analysis

Techniques for the quantitative summarization were drawn from the methodologies of content analysis as presented by Berelson,[4] and North.[5]

[4] Berelson, Bernard, Content Analysis in Communication Research (The Free Press 1952).

[5] North, Robert et. al. Content Analysis, (1963, Northwestern University Press)

The following categories of analysis were established:

1. Indicated purpose(s) of the scale
2. Type of scale
3. Person or persons rating
4. Teachers rated
5. Frequency of rating
6. Content of rating scales

A frequency count of responses was then made for each of the categories.

(See Appendix)

Findings

Purpose

Fifty percent of the responding school districts failed to report the purpose of their rating activity. Most districts which did specify purpose viewed evaluation as a way of leading the teacher to improve his own classroom performance. The second most frequent objective of rating teachers is improvement of instruction. Another purpose stated with relatively low frequency is that of selecting and retaining the best possible teachers.

Type of Scale

Fifty percent of the reporting districts used a 5-point rating scale, although support is also given for a 3-point, 2-point, and 4-point scale in the order listed. The range extends from a specified 9-point scale to an open-ended comment by the rater.

Rater

The major responsibility for the rating of teachers falls upon the principal in most of the districts responding, while others distribute the responsibility among the superintendent, coordinator, supervisor, department head, and in some cases to teachers in the form of self-evaluation.

Teachers Rated

Beginning or probationary teachers were named as the ratee most often. Less than 50 percent indicated that all teachers were rated. Several schools also indicated a rating procedure for substitute teachers.

Frequency of Rating

The frequency with which teachers were rated ranged from as often as twice a year to as infrequently as once every five years. In most cases the controlling factor was years of experience.

Summary of Content

Physical, personal, social, or emotional qualities made up 22 percent of all the variables considered. Only 3 percent were concerned with the evaluation of academic preparation. An additional 36 percent were concerned with those responsibilities associated with the conduct of classroom activity. A 21 percent emphasis was given to those responsibilities of the teacher outside the classroom. Eighteen percent of the content of the rating scales was found to be unclassifiable in the previous categories. (See column V, Table I, Appendix)

APPENDIX

FREQUENCY RESPONSES BY CATEGORY

As stated in the body of this report, responses were received from 53 of the 60 largest school districts in the country. Of these, 51 (or 97 percent) use rating scales to evaluate teacher performance. Since some districts have reported more than one variable for a particular category, total frequencies may exceed 51.

Indicated Purpose(s) of the Scale

26 districts--no purpose indicated
14 districts--indicated a purpose of aiding the teacher to become aware of his strengths and weaknesses, to assist in the improvement of staff members, to indicate professional growth, to appraise teacher performance
11 districts--indicated a purpose of improving instruction
3 districts--indicated a purpose of selecting and retaining the best possible teachers

Type of Scale (Figures report the number of possible choices the rater can choose from in each category.)

22 districts--5-point scale
17 districts--3-point scale
11 districts--2-point scale
10 districts--4-point scale
4 districts--no-point scale; only rater comments
1 districts--9-point scale

Person or Persons Rating

24 districts--principal only
10 districts--not indicated
6 districts--principal; subject, grade, or department head
4 districts--principal, supervisor
3 districts--principal, teacher (self-evaluation)
2 districts--principal, superintendent, teacher (self-evaluation)
2 districts--principal, director, superintendent, coordinator

Teachers Rated (Terminology is that used by reporting districts.)

21 districts--all teachers, including substitutes
10 districts--probationary and tenure
7 districts--not indicated
7 districts--probationary only
2 districts--probational, provisional, substitute, permanent, promotional, qualifying
1 district--probational, temporary, provisional, substitute
1 district--probationary, hourly
1 district--probationary, long-term substitute
1 district--new, those leaving, tenure, all teachers in school when principal changes

Frequency of Rating (Type of teacher and the corresponding frequency of rating. Terminology is that used by reporting districts.)

15 districts--not indicated
9 districts--probationary, annually
8 districts--all teachers, annually
5 districts--probationary, twice a year
4 districts--tenure, as needed
4 districts--tenure, every three years
3 districts--tenure, annually
3 districts--teachers leaving
2 districts--probationary, each semester
2 districts--tenure, every five years
2 districts--new teachers
2 districts--substitutes, twice a year
2 districts--substitutes, once a year
2 districts--substitutes, end of each semester
1 district--full-time substitute, once every five months; day-to-day substitute, periodically
1 district--all teachers-first, third and fifth year
1 district--all teachers, three times a year
1 district--all teachers, twice a year
1 district--probationary, first and third semesters
1 district--tenure, end of first and second semester
1 district--probationary, three times during probationary period
1 district--tenure, twice a year
1 district--principal change
1 district--all teachers who are rated annually

Content of Rating Scales

For purposes of this study, the content of the rating scales was divided into five major categories:

I. Physical, personal, emotional, or social qualities
II. Academic preparation
III. Responsibilities of, or directly associated with, the conduct of classroom activities
IV. Responsibilities outside the classroom
V. Others, including any rating criteria not previously considered. (For examples, see column V, Table I.)

TABLE I

District	No. of Variables Rated	Major Categories I	II	III	IV	V*
1	5	1	1	1	1	Comments
2	35	1	3	29	1	Suggestions
2**	21	6	1	5	7	Supt's. statement Dept. Head statement
3	1					Remarks
4	No rating system					
5	21	6	1	7	4	Commendable points Improvable points Steps taken for improvement
5**	10		1	7		Commendable points Steps taken for improvement
6	44	13		15	16	
7	18	8	1	7	2	
8	6	1	1		1	Over-all evaluation Special abilities Recommendations
9	27	8	1	8	8	Comments, recommendation
10	34	11	2	11	5	Recommendations, comments Assets, weaknesses Steps for improvement
11	15	5		3	4	Unusual services Comments Recommendations
12	35	6	1	16	10	Comments Recommendations
13	19	5		7	5	Recommendations Principal's statement
14	61	25	1	23	10	Recommendations Remarks
15	40	11		19	9	Suggestions for improvement
16	1					Over-all evaluation
17	29	8	1	7	11	Summary, recommendation
18	9	1		4	2	Comments, recommendation
19	9	1		1	5	Comments, recommendation
20	39	10	3	16	6	Suggestions Recommendations Assistance given General evaluation
21	8	2		3	2	Recommendations
22	12			6	1	Recommendations Strengths, weaknesses, help given, reaction to help.

		Major Categories				
District	No. of Variables Rated	I	II	III	IV	V*
23	19	5	1	8	3	Potential, composite grade
24	4	1		1		General evaluation Remarks
24**	6	1		3	2	
25	9			6	3	
26	5	1		3	1	
26**	18	4	1	9		Teacher work change, Recommendation, reason for leaving, position appropriate
26**	38	8		20	9	Recommendations
27	1					Over-all evaluation
28	22	7	1	8	2	Present degree of success, potential degree of success, special ability Needs
28**	6	1		2	1	Comment, prognosis for improvement
29	32	8	1	9	13	Recommendations
30	14	1	1	10	2	
31	26	6	1	10	6	Comments, general evaluation possibility of meeting standards
32	12	2	1	5	2	Over-all evaluation, recommendation
33	27	6	1	11	8	Comments
33**	7			3	3	Recommendations
34	29	7	1	14	5	Recommendations, general evaluation
35	23	6	1	12	4	
36	4	1		1	1	Comments
37	25	4		16	4	Remarks
38	15	4	1	6	3	Over-all evaluation
39	8	3	1	2	1	Total effectiveness
40	13	5		3	4	Recommendations
41	24	8		9	5	Comments, recommendation 6 criteria discussed in conference, strengths, comments, factors outside teacher control which affect teaching
43	23	9		7	5	Comments, over-all evaluation
44	No rating scale					
45	32	14	1	10	5	Recommendation, comments
46	16	3		8	3	Over-all effectiveness, recommendation

District	No. of Variables Rated	Major Categories I	II	III	IV	V*
47	12	5		4	2	Comments
48	27	6	1	10	8	General evaluation, recommendation
48**	25	4		12	8	Comment
49	9	1	1	2	4	Total effectiveness
50	15	5		2	5	Comments, composite rating, characteristics descriptive of teacher
51	20	10		9		Comments
52	10	1		2	4	Commendation, suggestion for improvement, recommendation
53	6	2	1	1	2	

*As specified above
**Indicates more than one scale used in district